Post Office Act, 1898 confer exclusive privilege on the Central government for conveyance of 'letters' which do not include newspapers and magazines.

The Department of Posts (erstwhile Department of Posts & Telegraph) has taken a number of steps, for betterment of services by diversifying its activities and also inducting new technology in its operations which, *inter-alia,* include:

1. New products in the area of business development, financial services, e-based services etc.

2: Introduction of computer based technology and internet applications.

3. Quality of service improvements.

The charges for transmission of a postal article are levied either in the form of a postage stamp or prepayment of postage in cash. The revenue from sale of postage stamp was Rs. 927.56 crores during 1999-2000 which declined to Rs. 852.87 crores in 2001 -2002. During the same period, postage realised in cash increased from Rs. 651.87 crores to Rs. 828.65 crores. Therefore, the revenue earned through postage comprising sale of postage stamp and prepayment of postage in cash has increased from Rs. 1579.43 crores in 1999-2000 to Rs. 1681.52 crores tn 2001-2002.

Bill for welfare of agricultural labour

*166. SHRI JIBON ROY: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Bill for welfare of agricultural labour is pending in his Ministry since long; and

(b) what is the present status of the Bill?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI SAHIB SINGH VERMA): (a) and <b) A proposal to enact a comprehensive legislation for the welfare of agricultural workers had been under consideration of the Govemment for a long time. However, due to lack of consensus amongst the States, the matter could not be processed further.